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Letter dated 28 June 2005 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Recent events in the Middle East have raised hopes of a possible resumption of the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians. We have witnessed the successful completion of Palestinian presidential elections on 9 January 2005, which was followed by the convening of the Summit at Sharm El Sheikh on 8 February 2005, where Israeli and Palestinian leaders announced a series of commitments to end violence, and to rebuild trust and mutual confidence. Although formal negotiations have not resumed, the two parties agreed to hold direct discussions to coordinate the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank, scheduled to take place in August 2005.

The international community has continued its efforts to support this positive momentum. The involvement and commitment of the Security Council has been evident in the presidential statements issued after the Palestinian presidential elections (S/PRST/2005/2), the Sharm El Sheikh Summit (S/PRST/2005/6), and on the conclusion of the meeting on supporting the Palestinian Authority held in London on 1 March 2005 (S/PRST/2005/12), in which the Security Council looked forward to the active engagement of the Quartet, and other interested parties, in the forthcoming period.

The Quartet, comprising the United Nations, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, has been working actively to support the parties to move towards a resumption of the peace process. The Quartet has consistently stressed the importance of a full and complete Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, consistent with the road map, as an important step to realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. To best ensure that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza takes place in a way most conducive to a renewed peace process, the Quartet appointed James Wolfensohn as its Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement. His mandate is to focus on the non-security aspects of withdrawal, particularly disposition of assets; passages, access and trade; and revival of the Palestinian economy in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip during and after the withdrawal. His mandate began on 1 June and will end on 31 December 2005.

The Quartet has stressed that a successful Gaza disengagement process would be an essential component to revitalizing the road map. In resolution 1515 (2003), the Security Council formally endorsed the Quartet's performance-based road map to a permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The road map is

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recognized by the international community as providing the framework to resolve the conflict and end the occupation that began in 1967, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), the Madrid Conference, the initiative of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, and the principle of land for peace.

The members of the Quartet have agreed that Mr. Wolfensohn and his team should be provided with the support necessary to establish an office in Jerusalem and fulfil his mission. In the context of Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), in which the Council endorsed the Quartet's road map and encouraged the diplomatic efforts of the Quartet and others, I should be grateful if you could confirm support for the proposed arrangements. In view of the urgent and temporary nature of Mr. Wolfensohn's mission, it would then be my intention to proceed swiftly with the provision of logistical, technical and financial assistance in support of his office.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**